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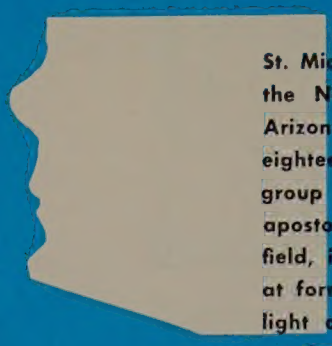
Mission Fields at Home

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament
Cornwells Heights, Pa.
June, 1958



St. Michael's Indian Boarding School in the heart of the Navaho Indian Reservation in St. Michael's, Arizona, is the center of mission activity for eighteen Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and a group of devoted lay apostles. The educational apostolate, so important in the Navaho mission field, is the day by day challenge of their efforts at forming the Whole Christ in an area where the light of Faith has yet to shine brightly. However, a missioner's vision penetrates far beyond her immediate surroundings and the spiritual needs of Navaho Indians at Keams Canyon 75 miles away and of the Hopi Indians who live on top of the first mesa near Keams attract their missionary zeal. The summer months and weekends during the school year find the SBS missioners at Keams and on the Mesa aiding Father Caron and Father Valentine, the zealous Franciscan missionaries who are spiritual Fathers to the Indians there. In this article Sister Irma relates a few incidents which occurred one week-end at Keams Canyon with the Navaho Indians and on top of the first mesa with the Hopi Indians.

S.B.S. *missioners'* TRAIL *in Arizona*

by

Sister Irma, S.B.S.

(County Tipperary, Eire)

Hopi Kachina Doll

On the Hopi mesa the service rendered by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, though different in many ways from that on the Navaho Trail, is very much mission activity. Thank God, Mass is now being said regularly on the mesa and we feel Our Lord's presence there will work and has already worked miracles.

As a result of last summer's work among the Hopis, more of their children enrolled

in St. Michael's School. They love the Sisters and appreciate what is done for them, but they miss their parents and little brothers and sisters whom they have left in their homes on the mesa. In most of these homes there is only an oil stove for heat and no water. All water must be carried up from five hundred feet below. How true it is that the love of the family makes the home.

One of the women who helps in the kitchen at St. Michael's Boarding School is a Hopi, a former student, who has a three year old son. Recently Sister Charlotte took Phillip to make a visit to Our Lord. As soon as he entered the Chapel he went directly to the altar railing, put his head between two posts and called out, "Father, Father here is Phillip Fritz." After the visit he said, "Good-bye Jesus Baby. Phillip and Sister Charlotte will see you tomorrow." Phillip knows each Sister and employee by name as well as the many children with whom he has come in contact. He speaks plainly and pronounces names correctly.

In order to maintain contact with the Hopi and Navaho Indians instructed in the summer, the Sisters go each First Friday to Keams Canyon and remain for the weekend. Two Sisters each month venture into this very real missionary work. In November Sister M. Conradine and Sister Irma headed for Hopi-land. November in Arizona can lay claim to the distinction of being the most beautiful of all the months of the year. Autumn is still about the mountains with warm days and chilly nights. The heat of the Summer has gone from the desert where the serenity of the evening skies and placid days foretell the coming winter season.

On the November afternoon that Father Valentine rolled into the school in his famed International to take the two Sisters on their missionary venture, a desert sunset lavished a display of color over the countryside, color that virtually turned the whole place into a veritable fairyland. The skies were so peaceful they lent themselves to meditation and their look like their color took

In this issue of MISSION FIELDS AT HOME, as we highlight the activities of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Arizona, we would like to pay special tribute to the zealous Franciscan Fathers and Brothers of St. John Baptist Province, Cincinnati, Ohio. The brown robe is a familiar sight on the Arizona desert and one which speaks of selfless sacrifice in view of the spiritual good of the Indians under the care of these missionaries. In this 60th year of the Franciscan pioneering among the Navaho in Arizona, we Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament direct our tribute to all the Franciscans to whom we have been able to lend our assistance in our mutual service of the Indians of Arizona. We know we praise all when we direct our tribute particularly to Bishop Espelage, Franciscan shepherd of the Navaho, Father Berard Haile, Franciscan scholar of the Navaho language, and Father Jerome Hesse, beloved Franciscan friend of the Navaho.

In this mission phase of the formation of the Whole Christ, the Franciscan Fathers and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament have rejoiced through the years at the coming of other religious for the furtherance of this apostolate — the Jesuit Fathers, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, and Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. We join all of them in praising the Divine Missioner who has given us the privilege of serving Him in His Indians of Arizona.

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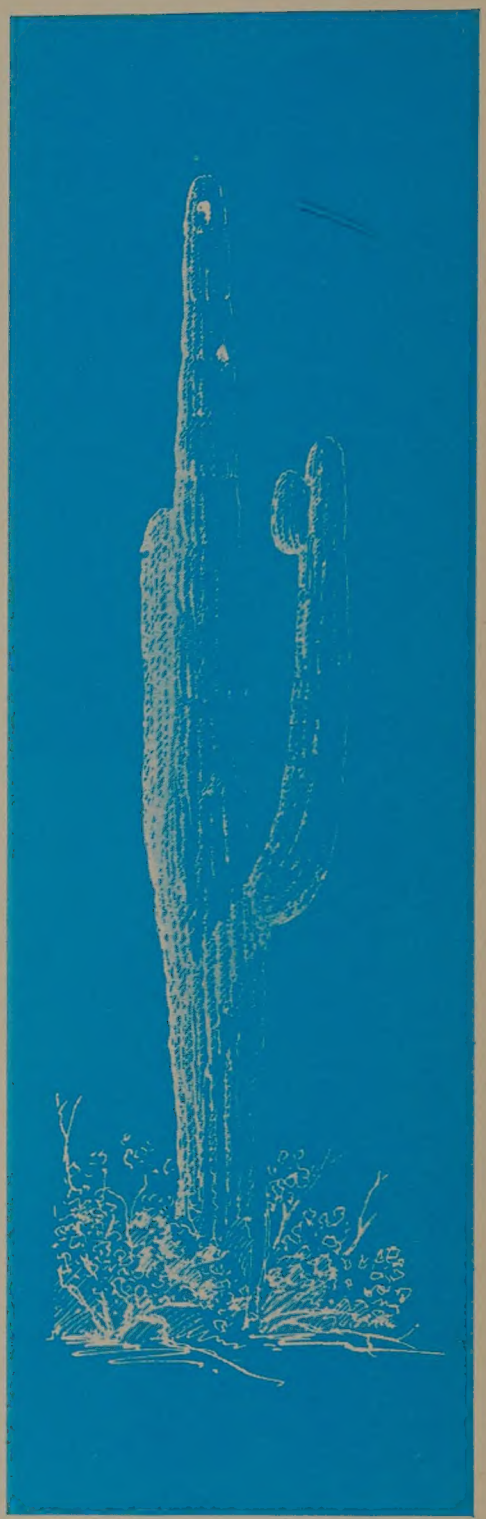
possession of the two travelers as they left St. Michael's behind them.

Keams Canyon is about 75 miles from St. Michaels. It is a land of canyons and mesas. Sequestered in the silence of the majestic rock formations is St. Joseph's mission which is made up of a rectory, a quaint church and a two by four doll mansion where the Sisters play house between mission exploits.

The day was well spent when the Sisters arrived at their little abode. After a hurried glance at the new residence and a quick repast they began the first phase of their mission adventure. They set out for the Hopi Mesa to give religious instructions. As Father and the Sisters wended their way to the mesa, Father occasionally tooted his horn and from nowhere popped children and their parents. Before minutes passed the old International was filled with the merry laughter of children.

The entrance to the Mesa is breathtaking. It is actually a split in the huge rock caused by erosion. The road is narrow and twisting. Safely on top where the Indians live the three missionaries found their way through the narrow streets to the little mission chapel, part of the Satala home. A toot of the horn collected about fourteen villagers. Father opened the door of the chapel and five over-eager lads ran in to be the first to light the two gas lights and the rusty old oil stove. After the preliminaries the three eager missionaries were enthusiastically explaining the Mass to the interested group. The instructions ended with prayers led by Father. At the final "Amen" the whole fourteen excitedly burst forth, "Songs, Father! Songs, Father!" Father took his place at the old organ and the touch of his fingers brought forth the familiar hymns. All joined in the singing. The peace which the world cannot give permeated God's little home on top of the rock. "Soldiers in Christ's Army" had to be sung three times. In the silence that reigned after the last hymn, Father distributed the little candy he had been able to get for them. The old folks enjoyed getting it just as much as the young. Good-byes were said and the ever eager lads ran out as quickly as they had entered.



The following morning the stars still hung over the canyon as the Sisters found their way to the Church where they prepared for their full day with three Holy Masses. After Mass the Sisters went to the Keams Canyon Boarding School where they made arrangements for instructions of the Navaho Indians on Sunday. While they were there they had the opportunity of seeing the plant. After their tour of the school, Father and the Sisters returned to the International which began to rub tires on a single track road that zigzagged its way into a Navaho settlement lost in the shadows of the White Cone Monument, a cone-shaped rock which seems to tower into the blue skies. At White Cone they visited two former students of St. Michael's and three families that made up the settlement. The purpose of the visit was to tell the people they would have Mass Tuesday. In the first hogan the mother was alone with the children. All were huddled together in a corner. Household goods were suspended from branches. Pans, blankets, horse gears, ropes, an empty shortening can, a flour sack, a wash tub of clothes and a tanned goat skin could all be seen. On the ground were other things. Sheep skins were placed here and there. **The mother was very friendly, but timid. At Father's request she showed the Sisters some of the boys' shirts. She had made them out of old dresses at their sewing center. A bag of candy did much to create a more friendly atmosphere especially among the children. In fact before the Sisters' departure they were all smiles and chatter. The baby even showed them her cat and with her baby prattle made the Sign of the Cross. The children, although all victims of mumps, acted as if nothing were wrong. The Sisters supplied a little medication for their ailments and reminded them once again about Holy Mass.**

At the next stop, Father and the Sisters found twin hogans, where lived Nellie and Maggie, two former students of St. Michael's. Nellie, who was the only one home invited them in. Suspended from the ceiling of the hogan was a piece of mutton fat under which Father stood. While talking Father was swaying back and forth and with every sway the mutton skin brushed his bald head. There is humor even on visitations. After telling Nellie Tuesday would be Mass day, Father and the Sisters departed leaving a very happy Nellie in the hogan.

On their homeward trip Father decided to stop at the home of one of the ladies whose children had been missing instructions. Usually on approaching this home one is joyfully and graciously greeted. On this day however, there was no welcome. In fact all was so still the three concluded there must be no one home. However, as they drew closer they saw a lady heavily garbed with her head wrapped in a green towel, silently and intently husking corn. As they alighted from the car she raised her head and smiled. On reaching the scene of the work they discovered she was so sick she could hardly speak, and on inquiring why the strenuous work when so sick, she told them she had been in bed but that her husband had gone hunting and would not return for days and in his absence she was forced to get up to keep her little ones from

Navaho summer hogan
— Shiik'eh

starving. The Sisters put the dear lady to bed and gave her what medication they found in Father's leather bag. This errand of mercy completed, the next step was to get good food for the little ones, which they did. The following day, they returned to see her and found her much improved and most cheerful because someone cared for her childern.

On Sunday morning Father said Mass on the mesa. With the help of the Sisters the people prayed the Mass together and sang hymns. Their simplicity and sincerity must have brought joy to the heart of Our Lord.

A-NI-SHO-DI

(Catholic Missionary)

SISTER MARIA GORETTI, S.B.S. is one of the two Navaho Indian girls who is now in religious life. Sister made her first profession of vows as a Sister of the Blessed

to HER

Sacrament on March 9, 1955, the day following the funeral of Mother Katharine Drexel, the foundress of the community. This American missionary foundress was dedicated to the Eucharistic vision of the oneness of all people in Christ. It seemed fitting that at the close of her life her missionary daughters should welcome to be ONE with them in their religious family a member of the Navaho Indian tribe among whom Mother Katharine Drexel had pioneered as a missionary daughter of the Church.

After her profession, Sister Maria Goretti was missioned for two years in Louisiana where she experienced the joys of an S.B.S. missioner in the South. Last August

"Best of all was the first time Sister Inez and I went to the reservation out at Lukachukai and visited my grandparents. Grandmother couldn't get over the fact that her granddaughter was an A-ni-sho-di, Navaho for Catholic Missionary."

Sister was assigned to Tegakwitha Indian Mission on the Navaho Indian Reservation in Houck, Arizona where the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament conduct a day school. This was like returning home for our little Navaho Sister for she was born in Fort Defiance, Arizona. Sister writes,

PEOPLE in ARIZONA

"As the days passed I met many of the people and Mother Beata Maria would introduce me to them. When she told them I was a Navaho, many didn't believe her until I spoke to them in our language and told them the clan to which I belonged. Then they did believe and went away with some joy and pride." The explanatory captions of these pictures of Sister with her own beloved Navaho people are in Sister's own words.

"I went to meet Grandfather who was bringing in the sheep. I frightened him. Poor Grandfather! I could see that he was thinking, 'What is this A-ni-sho-di doing out here?' I said, yeh-a-tah-shi-Nahlie — Hello Grandfather.' It finally dawned on him that I must be his granddaughter who went away to become a Sister. His eyes filled with tears and he opened his arms to welcome his A-ni-sho-di, saying, 'Shi yashi, shi yashi— my little one, my little one.'"

"It is such a joy to teach the children here and to be able to speak to them in their own language when they seem confused about what I am teaching."

Mountains, plains, desert, arroyas,

Section, rugged Indian trails, school,

to be dispensed in the clinic, showe

NAVAHO

PARISH

in ARIZONA

by
Mother Beata Maria, S.B.S.
(Philadelphia, Pa.)

s, Highway 66, Santa Fe Railroad
ations to Navaho hogans, medicine
be given to children — ALL spell

Hogans near, hogans far, but all find the Mission when they need help — which is daily! Help in filling out social security forms, telephone calls to be made for Navahos who know no or very little English! Babies to be baptized, Navahos to be buried, meeting of Navaho of the area in children's dining room to talk over the problems of the moment!

Tegakwitha Mission among the Navaho celebrates her 25 years. At fiirst the Mission was solely a Clinic for first aid and a center where Navaho women could come to sew. It was soon felt that a school was needed.

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A school was begun in 1932. Tegakwitha Day School is the only Catholic Day school on the vast Navaho Reservation. Here the children are taught the 4 R's of school, with the most important R—Religion—the core of the whole Educational Program.

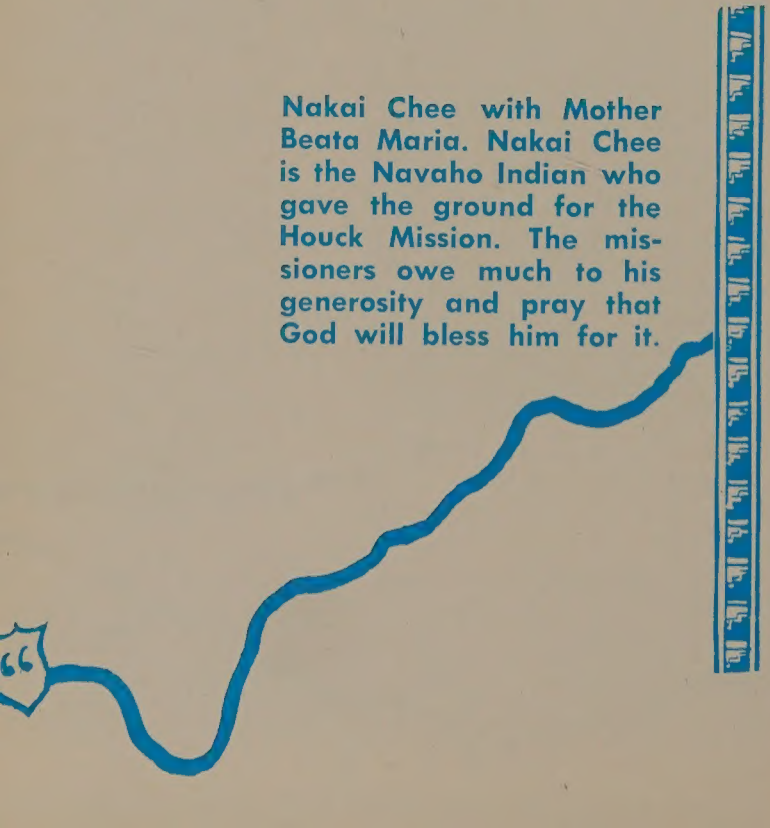
The parish is cared for by the Franciscan Fathers of Cincinnati. Reverend Father Burcard is the Pastor. Brother Francis Xavier is the faithful bus driver. Brother drives the bus 120 miles on his daily trip to gather the children who come to school at Tegakwitha. The school is staffed by five Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The children are given a wholesome hot noon meal each day. Dorothy Silversmith, a Navaho, is our faithful cook.

A bilingual problem presents a difficulty but Sr. Maria Goretti, our Navaho Sister, can clear the language difficulties when she explains the words she is sure they do not understand in Navaho. How their eyes shine and the faces light up with joy that they know what she means.

The older Navaho, too, get great joy since they know that Sister is a Navaho. They have confidence immediately when they know someone understands them and can converse with them.

Just two days before Christmas at the rim of Painted Desert two of our Navaho boys were killed in a head-on collision. The father of one of the boys came the day before Christmas and dug his own son's grave. He finished it late in the afternoon. It was six o'clock when the body was brought to the Mission. It was very dark. Night had come. Father Burcard asked if two Sisters would go



Nakai Chee with Mother Beata Maria. Nakai Chee is the Navaho Indian who gave the ground for the Houck Mission. The missioners owe much to his generosity and pray that God will bless him for it.

out with him to the graveyard with flashlights. Two Sisters followed Father and Brother to the graveyard with two flashlights in each hand. When they arrived at the graveyard there were two bodies to be buried instead of one! One of the boys who had driven the pickup said, "This one —pointing to the bottom box has to be put in the ground first." Father, Brother and two Navaho boys lifted the top box off so the bottom box could go into the ground first. There was only one grave! The first grave was not deep enough to bury the second body. This was 7 o'clock! The second grave had to be dug. One man was there to dig the grave. The pickup was turned around so the headlights could shine where the grave was to

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Sr. M. Inez welcomes the Navaho women and children to the Houck Mission. She says "hello" to the baby in the cradle board. In Navaho that would be "Ya-ta-hey."

A Navaho pupil at the Houck Mission School stands before her home with her grandmother, her mother and her two sisters. A Navaho Indian home is called a hogan.

66

66

Houck

(Cont'd)

be dug. We remembered it was Christmas Eve and it did not take much imagination for us to realize how cold it must have been that first Christmas eve when Our Infant Saviour was born.

The missioner's life amid the Navaho Parish in Arizona is packed full of experiences that run the gamut from life to death, in heat and cold, on the sand and on the highway.

This is just a bird's eye view of our parish life in Navaho-land!

Two Navaho children visit at the mission.

Sr. M. Jane Frances is a veteran missionary and well loved by the Navaho.

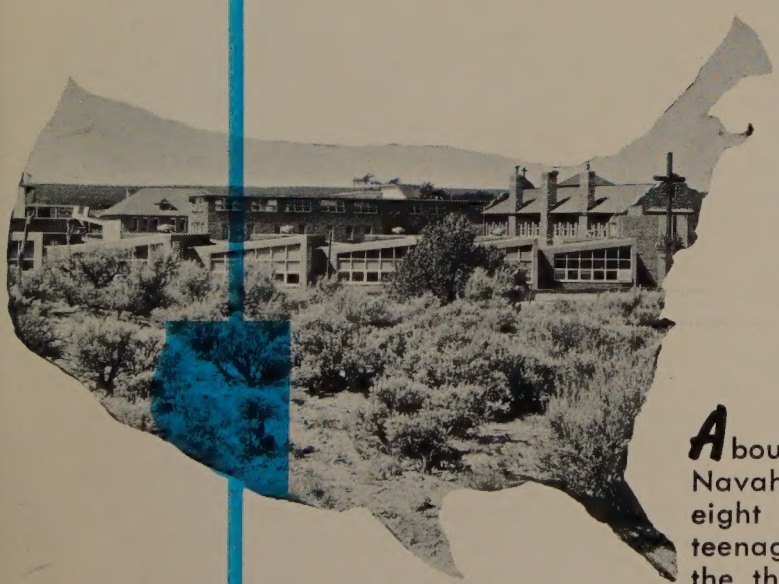
- The largest group of American Indians are the **NAVAHO Indians.** According to the estimated 1957 census of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, they total 83,420. Approximately 72,000 of them live on the Navaho Reservation—23,574 square miles reaching into the four states of Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. Over half of this area is desert and only ten percent is arable.

ARIZONA IS BUT ONE OF TWENTY STATES WHERE THE SISTERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, an American community dedicated to serving Christ in the Indians and Colored People, SERVE AS MISSIONERS. Founded in 1891 by Reverend Mother Katharine Drexel, THEY STRIVE THROUGH THEIR EUCHARISTIC VOCATION TO MAKE THESE MANY, ONE WITH THEM IN CHRIST. Theirs is an apostolate which includes education, home visitation, catechetical instruction and social service work. It reaches into large cities in the North, South and mid-West, into rural areas of the deep South and into the Indian reservations of New Mexico, Arizona and South Dakota. THE AUXILIARIES, SUBSCRIBERS AND FRIENDS WHO AID THE SISTERS ARE THE "MISSIONARIES BEHIND THE SCENES" WHO MAKE POSSIBLE THIS SERVICE IN THE VAST AREA OF THE HOME MISSIONS.

ARIZONA missioners MAP the way by EDUCATING

In 1902 St. Michael's Boarding School, St. Michael's, Arizona, was erected by Reverend Mother Katharine Drexel for the education of the Navaho Indians. Staffed and maintained by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, this school offered the only Catholic elementary education available to the Indians on the Navaho Reservation. Thousands of Navaho—and other Indians—have attended St. Michael's Indian School since its foundation.

1946 saw the beginning of St. Michael's High School. The necessity of higher education was an encouraging sign of the fruitfulness of the previous mission activity. In this article Sr. M. Evangelist, S.B.S., an Arizona missioner for twenty years, illustrates the educational advancement during the past twenty years. This subject is a timely one in view of the Navaho Conference on Education which was held on March 17 and 18 in Gallup, New Mexico.



by
Sr. M. Evangelist, S.B.S.
(Pittsburgh, Pa.)

About 20 years ago, when very few Navahos could boast of even an eight grade education, and when teenagers could be found as low as the third grade, the rare visitors to St. Michael's Indian School asked, "Do these children speak English or must you teach them in their native tongue?" (This question amused the Sisters because the Navaho language is very difficult to learn. So difficult in fact that during World War II, in

some parts of the South Pacific, military messages relayed by Navaho G.I.s proved an "unbreakable code.") Observing the shyness of the Indian boys and girls, visitors carried away the impression that it would be practically impossible to teach the pupils in either language. But these Navaho boys and girls loved the Sisters and responded willingly and intelligently once visitors had departed.

Twenty years, and another generation later, frequent visitors to St. Michael's asked, when being shown through the modern high school building, "What use can your students make of this type of education?" We hope this article will give a satisfying answer to that question.

As late as 1951 one Eastern visitor who was traveling through the West giving talks on the Mission, as he was being escorted into the high school lobby asked somewhat nervously. "Now, these students I am going to address — do they understand English?" Sister replied in the affirmative and brought home her point by showing him the large Chemistry and Biology Labs, Typing Room and Library. In the Assembly Room the visitor was greeted with a hearty, "Good afternoon, Father," to which greeting Father replied so good-humoredly that he won the hearts as well as the attention of his Indian audience. When the talk was over they begged, "Tell us some more, Father." Explaining that he had an appointment to speak at a far distant school, with real regret on both sides, he took his leave. On the way to his car he wittily remarked, "Is that a sample of the shy Indians I've heard about? Why, I have never talked to a more enthusiastic group of teen-agers."

For the past several summers, arrangements have been made for the older girls to work in private homes in the Los A ,geles suburbs. Three months of steady employment under the guidance of kind, motherly women has proved a real educational boon to these Reservation lassies, while the money earned has been a welcome asset to the struggling parents at home. Upon their return to school in September the girls relate experiences which to them assumed proportions of adventures to be shared with the Sisters. Girls from arid, sun-baked areas, catching their first glimpse of the mighty Pacific; girls from one-room hogans helping to take care of a large house; girls, whose mothers have taught them how to prepare the simple meals the family eat, assisting the hostess arrange the table for a big birthday dinner etc.

Of all the experiences related, the one we think best typifies the captivating simplicity of these people, whom through our close contact we have learned to love, is the following:

Two of the girls were assisting at Mass in St. Thomas Church in Los Angeles. To use their expression when telling of the incident —they hoped God knew they were at Mass because they were too far away to see anything. (Reservation Chapels are of necessity very small.) The sermon began. All of a sudden one sat up straight—the voice—it was familiar! She took what seemed to her to be a bird's eye view of the tall speaker, nudged her companion and whispered excitedly, "Why, that's our Bishop!" After Mass the two girls went to the Rectory and rang the doorbell. The priest who opened the door received a plain statement of fact, "We've come to see the Bishop." Father, probably amused at the naive informality of the situation, asked innocently, "Which one?" Such a question. The older of the two replied, "Why, our Bishop, of course. Bishop Espelage of Gallup." The girls continued their story with, "Father just laughed at us and invited us in. After a few minutes the Bishop came and we all sat down and he asked us about ourselves, our homes and our work. After a while it was time to go and so we left.—And you know what, Sister? The Bishop was very happy we came to see him."

Twenty years have brought about other noticeable changes as well. The Sisters have had many occasions to "comfort the sorrowful." Many years ago it was a Navaho mother (who had not yet received the gift of faith) sitting on a fallen tree trunk sobbing with anguish while a few yards away her 17 year old daughter was being buried in the floor of the hogan. (This hogan was then boarded up and no one would go near it any more.) As years went on men and women of all ages brought their dear departed ones to the school cemetery, which until 1954 was used for practically all Catho-

lic burials in this area. Many times through those years, Sisters put their arms around blanket-clad figures, while Indian women sobbed out their grief on comforting shoulders and listened while words of hope and promises of eternal happiness were whispered to them. More recently we stood in a funeral parlor looking down on a tiny figure in a white satin-lined coffin. It was an exceptionally beautiful year and a half old baby dressed in a complete blue outfit, from lace-trimmed bonnet to tiny booties. But the little body was not laid on the white satin. It was at rest on a brand new brightly colored Navaho blanket, a gift from grandmother. Truly, the past is still very much a part of the present.

The Sisters are not only a comfort to them in their sorrows, but a participator in their joys, both big and little. Twenty years ago life was much simpler than it is today. So, correspondingly, were the interests of the children. Way back then—Sister went to the large field where the boys played to supervise until study time. Usually at that time of the evening the 132 boys, large and small, could be seen, according to groups, playing from one end of the field to the other. Sister looked around in consternation—only 2 very small boys. Where were the 130? Upon questioning the two, Sisters received the very inadequate reply. "Up there—doing nothing." "Up there" means a walk of several minutes and the rounding of a hill. When Sister arrived "up there" she saw a sight that even in that day and age seemed unbelievable. All the boys, big and little, were sitting comfortably on the edge of what used to be a rather deep pond. On the water was a mother duck and her brood. (Since water is so scarce in that area, ducks were quite a novelty to the Indian lads.) But what made Sister hesitate to speak was that a kind of low counting was going on, "1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4-5-6" etc. Finally, by observing the boys, listening to the count and watching the ducks, Sister discovered the general idea of the "game". They were counting to see which little duckling could keep its head under the water the longest. Satisfied with their own brand of TV, they reluctantly rose to their feet when the study bell rang. On that evening so long ago, little did Sister dream she would be there to see future Indian boys at St. Michael's dressed in tailored suits, escorting lovely Indian girls, dressed in pastel shade formals, to Homecoming Dances and Proms.

After four years of high school — then what? More opportunities near home to be gainfully employed as clerk-typists, and interpreters, thus putting to use their Commercial training; college education made possible through Catholic Scholarships and more recently through Navaho Tribal funds; Christian married life. The girls so far have chosen Nursing and Teaching and the boys are choosing various branches of engineering or have set their goal as future lawyers of the tribe. There is also one dentist in the making. But most of the boys are going directly into the armed forces immediately after graduation. In June of 1955 and each successive following spring, increasing numbers of College and Nursing School graduates have been welcomed on a return visit to the high school they formerly attended. The Sisters rejoice with these young people, trained now as nurses or teachers, as these graduates, with real joy in their accomplishment, seek and find employment in schools and hospitals among their own people.

In the early years of the school the Indian boys and girls studied the truths of our religion while their teachers prayed and taught that these truths might be the guiding light of their lives. Now, their children —in some instances their grandchildren — are not only practicing and professing this same faith but are helping as lay apostles among their own people. During the Christmas vacation, carols learned at school are sung in their Reservation Chapels. Here and there, without accompaniment, strains of the Gloria and Credo during High Mass can be heard from a Mission Chapel. Graduates who live near Government Boarding Schools help take care of the Catholic youngsters from these schools who attend Mass in nearby Chapels and help give instructions after Mass.

The work is expanding and there is no question in our minds about the "use of this kind of education" for our Indian students. In view of the picture of the whole, high education can now be seen as one of the Arizona missioner's most powerful means of building up the Whole Christ in Arizona.

"The Old and the Modern" is the title of this prize winning photo taken by Father Silverius Meyer, O.F.M. It was voted the best news feature photograph of 1957 by the New Mexico Press Association. Typical of the mission apostolate in Arizona — an apostolate which day by day meets the challenge of "the old and the modern" — it symbolizes the meeting of the past with the present in mission Arizona. The Missioner, living in the present, respects the heritage of the past, and in the Christian blending of the two prepares for a glorious future.

TOGETHER we are ALL missionaries!

The INDIAN MISSIONS need YOUR help.
In your love of Christ ADOPT A MISSION and TOGETHER WE WILL SERVE CHRIST in the INDIANS OF ARIZONA.

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Cornwells Heights, Pa.